

past and extending my sympathies to all the earthquake victims and their families. My prayers are with them.

Taiwan is a model of success in Asia. Through hard work and ingenuity, Taiwan has emerged as one of the strongest economies on the Pacific Rim and is a showcase democracy in the world. The accomplishments of Taiwan, whether economic or political, are truly impressive.

I am confident that Taiwan's future successes will remain impressive, despite the recent earthquake which has severely damaged Taiwan's economy and infrastructure. God-speed and good fortune to our friends in Taiwan as they rebuild their nation.

TRIBUTE TO TODD OFFORD

HON. RON PACKARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. Todd Offord as Reserve Firefighter of the Year for the City of Lake Forest. When Todd was 16 years old he began as a Fire Explorer and was certified in Fire Control and auto extrication. He also attended the Fire Explorer Academy at El Toro Marine Base. In 1989, Todd became a Paid Call Firefighter and has since attended the Driver/Operator academy, become certified as an Emergency Medical Technician, and attended the Orange County Fire Departments 562 hour Firefighter Academy.

In his time as a Reserve Firefighter, Todd has helped with yearly Christmas decorations, community fairs, serving food to the homeless and many other volunteer projects. Todd is currently employed by the El Toro Water District in customer service and continues to be a valuable asset to the Reserve Firefighters in Lake Forest.

Mr. Speaker, reserve firefighters provide key services in protecting communities and citizens, as well as our Nation's forests. Todd Offord has gone above and beyond the call of duty in his service to the Orange County Community. I am proud to recognize Todd Offord as Reserve Firefighter of the Year.

HONORING BILL BURKE FOR HIS ROLE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SAN DIEGO CHAPTER OF THE AGC

HON. BRIAN P. BILBRAY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Mr. BILBRAY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to honor and congratulate Bill Burke for the leadership and direction he has provided to the San Diego Chapter of the Associated General Contractors (AGC) over the last 23 years. As Chairman of AGC, his countless hours of persistent hard work have led to some great strides and advancements for general contractors in San Diego.

During Bill's tenure he provided fundamental leadership that expanded the tasks of the San

Diego AGC by moving them into a multi-dimensional organization that not only strives to accomplish the goals and achievements of the construction industry, but also provides apprenticeships, safety, and benefit programs. He has demonstrated great flexibility and creativity over the last two decades to keep ahead of the changing role of general contractors and the construction industry in San Diego County.

At the end of this year Bill Burke will be retiring from his leadership position. He will remain a constant standard and hard act to follow for all future AGC Chairmen, his impact on the construction industry in San Diego county will be felt for many future generations. I thank him for all his efforts and congratulate him on his retirement and wish him the best of luck in all future endeavors.

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES OF CONGRESS?

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, what are the priorities of this Congress? Today, the House voted on the Defense Appropriations Conference Report, the final vote to determine funding for the Department of Defense. The Defense Appropriations, Military Construction, and Energy and Water Appropriations bills together have provided \$289 billion in defense funds, which is \$8 billion more than was requested by the Administration. In addition, the Defense Appropriations Conference Report allocates \$1 billion for the procurement of "test" F-22 fighters and an additional \$275 million has been provided for the purchase of five unrequested F-15 jets. Extra funding, well beyond what is needed to maintain a strong defense, is being allocated to the Defense Department at the same time as programs that help the neediest Americans are being severely cut. Millions of children across the country are without health care, programs to help improve our children's education are being cut, and millions of people are living in poverty at a time when affordable housing is consistently decreasing. This Congress must better prioritize in order to provide for the needs of Americans.

Currently, 11 million children in the United States go without health insurance and 150,000 of them are in my home state of Colorado. Eight million children without health insurance could be insured using the excess \$8 billion in defense funding.

Several "test" F-22 fighters will be purchased by the United States at a cost of \$300 million per plane. Every uninsured child in Colorado who suffers because he or she cannot receive health care could be covered at half the price of a single F-22 fighter. Instead, the fighter jets will be produced while children in every state across America suffer due to a lack of needed health coverage.

Education is another area where deep funding cuts will harm our nation's children. Approximately \$3 billion has been targeted for cuts from the education budget for fiscal year

2000. These cuts damage education programs intended to assist over two million children. This proposal would cut programs that provide needed after school care, reading and math help for low-income children, and technology support for schools. Under current proposals, states would not receive grants to assist in School-to-Work programs and funding would be denied for drug and violence coordinators in middle schools across the country. The cost of a single F-22 fighter would provide approximately 750,000 low-income and needy children with lunches at school for a year through the National School Lunch program. In addition, about 675,000 needy students could be provided with school lunches at the cost of the five unrequested F-15 fighters provided for in the Defense Appropriations Conference Report. Instead, 2.9 billion dollars' worth of education programs are in danger of being underfunded.

Finally, even in today's booming economy, millions of Americans suffer from homelessness and poverty. According to a Congressional Research Service report by Morton J. Schussein, "Housing the Poor: Federal Housing Program for Low-Income Families," on any given night, 600,000 people sleep on the streets because they have no home. In addition, 12.5 million people are classified by the government as having severe housing problems such as substandard and crowded living conditions. In recent years, there has been a 15.8 percent increase in the number of very-low-income households in the United States and the number of affordable housing units has decreased by 42 percent between 1974 and 1995. Severe physical deficiencies such as bad wiring, broken heating and dilapidated structures affect 3.1 million families that rent homes.

So, what are the priorities of this Congress? The answer lies in its actions. When defense is provided with billions of dollars more than what was requested, when too many kids remain uninsured, and when education initiatives and affordable housing programs are in danger of being cut by millions, it becomes crystal clear that the priorities of this Congress are grossly out of sync with those of the American people.

FOCUSING ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN THE NEW BRAUNFELS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the education efforts of the New Braunfels Independent School District in collaboration with the Center for Leadership in Science, Mathematics and Technology at the Alamo Community College District. These two educational districts have joined to host a meeting entitled "The Community Focuses on Academic Excellence," scheduled for October 19, 1999, in New Braunfels, TX. The meeting will address the need for more students to engage in hands-on science exploration in grades K-12.